

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 26102 01 OF 02 090707Z
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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0697
INFO USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 26102

E.O.11652: GDS
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SUBJ: AMBASSADOR'S TALK WITH HARTLING

1. AMBASSADOR SPENT AN HOUR WITH HARTLING EVENING SEPT 7
REVIEWING HIS TRIP TO THAILAND AND GOING OVER THE KUALA
LUMPUR MEETING AND EFFORTS TO OBTAIN GREATER INTERNATIONAL
EFFORT ON INDOCHINESE REFUGEES.

2. HARTLING WAS IN AN EBULLIENT MOOD. HE HAD SPENT TWO
HOURS WITH MINISTER OF INTERIOR LEK AND PRIME MINISTER
KRIANGSAK AND CHARACTERIZED THOSE MEETINGS AS VERY FRUIT-
FUL. HE BELIEVED MAJOR PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE. THAI HAD
STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF GREATER INTERNATIONAL RESETTLEMENT
EFFORT WHICH HE HAD ACKNOWLEDGED. HE HAD INFORMED THEM
AND THEY WELCOMED UNHCR'S MOVING THAI PROGRAM INTO THEIR
REGULAR PROGRAM. HE HAD URGED THAIS TO UNDERTAKE EFFORT
TO RESETTLE UNSPECIFIED NUMBER OF REFUGEES IN THAILAND.
THAIS HAD AGREED TO SETTING UP COOPERATIVE EFFORT UNDER
UNHCR FOR RELOCATION OF REFUGEES WITHIN THAILAND.
"JOINT PROJECTS" WOULD BE WORKED OUT INVOLVING ASSISTANCE
TO THAIS AS WELL AS REFUGEES IN AREAS WHERE REFUGEES
WOULD BE RELOCATED. FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT IN REFUGEE RE-
LOCATION EFFORT WOULD BE COORDINATED BY UNHCR. THE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BANGKO 26102 01 OF 02 090707Z

STAFFS WOULD BE WORKING ON FURTHER DETAILS. IT WAS
ESSENTIAL AT THIS TIME TO AVOID PUBLICITY AND TO LOW-KEY
THE PROGRAM. (THE NEXT DAY AT LUNCH HARTLING WAS MUCH
MORE SUBDUED. IT TURNED OUT, HE SAID, THAT THERE WAS NO
AGREEMENT WITH THE THAIS TO CARRY OUT THAI-UNHCR JOINT
PROJECTS. HIS PEOPLE WERE NOW TRYING TO OBTAIN BEFORE HE
LEFT THAI AGREEMENT TO SETTING UP A JOINT COMMITTEE WITH

UNHCR TO CONSIDER THE PROBLEMS OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN THAILAND. THIS HAD NOT YET BEEN AGREED ON. HE URGED US NOT TO PRESS THE THAIS TOO HARD ON RESETTLEMENT IN THAILAND.)

3. AMBASSADOR SAID HE WANTED TO REVIEW REFUGEE PROBLEM HERE AND PARTICULARLY EFFORT TO ACHIEVE GREATER INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON INDOCHINA REFUGEES. HE SAID THAT THE PRINCIPLE UNDER WHICH WE HAD TO OPERATE WITH THAIS WAS THAT EFFORTS TO RELOCATE REFUGEES IN THAILAND AND TO INTENSIFY EFFORTS TO RESETTLE THEM ABROAD HAD TO PROCEED SIMULTANEOUSLY, THAT INDEED WOULD BE ONLY WAY THAIS COULD BE INDUCED TO CONTINUE TO ACCEPT REFUGEES AND BEGIN THEIR OWN RESETTLEMENT EFFORTS. IT WAS ALWAYS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT WE KEPT URGING THAIS TO INITIATE THEIR OWN RESETTLEMENT EFFORTS. IT WAS FOR THIS REASON OF GREAT IMPORTANCE THAT HARTLING SHOULD REDOUBLE HIS EFFORTS TO OBTAIN BROADER INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO ACCEPT INDOCHINESE REFUGEES. AMBASSADOR ALSO REMINDED HIM THAT PROBLEM WAS OBVIOUSLY NOT A SHORT-TERM ONE, THAT SIZEABLE RELOCATION IN THAILAND, WHILE ESSENTIAL WOULD NOT ELIMINATE THE PROBLEM, AND THAT WE MUST BE PREPARED TO DEAL WITH STEADY FLOW OF REFUGEES FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS. HARTLING AGREED WITH BOTH POINTS.

4. AMBASSADOR SAID HE WAS AWARE OF HARTLING'S DISCUSSIONS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BANGKO 26102 01 OF 02 090707Z

WITH OUR PEOPLE IN GENEVA AND THAT HE WANTED TO REVIEW THE KUALA LUMPUR MEETING AND WHAT FOLLOWS FROM IT. HE SAID FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR MR. HARTLING TO PROVIDE A GOOD FACTUAL BRIEFING OF THE REFUGEE SITUATION, TO URGE THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO A BROADER REFUGEE ACCEPTANCE PROGRAM, AND TO INDICATE HIS INTEREST IN MOVING TOWARD SOME SORT OF HIGHER LEVEL MEETING TO WIN GREATER COOPERATIVE EFFORT ON REFUGEES. HARTLING'S EFFORTS CULMINATING IN THIS WIDER INTERNATIONAL MEETING OR FORUM WOULD HOPEFULLY LEAD TO FURTHER CONSTRUCTIVE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON REFUGEES, EITHER AS REGARDS GREATER AND BROADER REFUGEE ACCEPTANCES, MORE UNHCR FUNDING, AND BETTER OPERATIONAL RULES IN THE HANDLING OF REFUGEES.

5. HARTLING SAID HE AND HIS STAFF HAD GIVEN MUCH THOUGHT TO THIS PROBLEM. HE FELT THAT ANY INTERNATIONAL MEETING MUST BE WELL PREPARED SO AS TO BE SURE THAT SOME USEFUL RESULTS WOULD EMERGE, THAT HE SAW NO WAY TO COMBINE THE UNHCR EXCOMM MEETING IN OCTOBER AND A SPECIAL MEETING ON INDOCHINESE REFUGEES SINCE NEITHER HAD THE GROUND BEEN ADEQUATELY LAID NOR COULD HE EXCLUDE CERTAIN PARTICIPANTS

FROM EXCOMM MEETING. WHILE THE EXCOMM MEETING WOULD, OF COURSE, DISCUSS INDOCHINESE REFUGEE PROGRAM AND RESULT IN MOVING THE THAI PROGRAM FROM THE UNHCR SPECIAL PROGRAM TO ITS GENERAL PROGRAM, EXCOMM WAS NOT THE RIGHT FORUM FOR ANY SPECIAL MEETING. HE FELT THAT AN INTERNATIONAL MEETING COULD BE HELPFUL BUT THAT HIS FINAL JUDGMENT WOULD DEPEND UPON HIS MEETINGS IN NEW YORK AND OTHER CAPITALS, AND A DISCUSSION WITH THE SECRETARY. HE SAID HE HAD GIVEN THOUGHT TO SETTING UP A COORDINATING COMMITTEE IN GENEVA OF SPECIALLY CHOSEN COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVES TO PERIODICALLY

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 26102 02 OF 02 090714Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BANGKOK 26102

CONSIDER INDOCHINESE REFUGEE PROBLEMS, BUT HE HAD NOT FULLY MADE UP HIS MIND ON HOW TO PROCEED.

6. AMBASSADOR SAID THAT WHILE A COORDINATING FORUM IN GENEVA COULD BE QUITE HELPFUL, IT WOULD NOT SUBSTITUTE FOR A MEETING MADE UP OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM CAPITALS. THE TWO WERE IN ANY EVENT NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE. THE IMPORTANT POINT WAS TO ACHIEVE A GREATER INTERNATIONAL EFFORT ON INDOCHINESE REFUGEES. THE MEETING WOULD BE HOPEFULLY THE CULMINATING POINT OF AN EFFORT TO OBTAIN GREATER INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT; IT WOULD HAVE FORMIDABLE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES AS WELL AS GOOD PRACTICAL RESULTS. SUCH A WELL STAGED MEETING COULD VERY SIGNIFICANTLY CONTRIBUTE TO OUR RELOCATION EFFORTS IN THAILAND. INDEED THE THAIS WOULD BE WATCHING HOW HARTLING FOLLOWED UP HIS PLEDGES TO OBTAIN GREATER INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON THE RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES; THE NATURE OF HIS EFFORTS OVER THE NEXT TWO MONTHS WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT THAI ATTITUDES.

7. HARTLING SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE POINTS AND WOULD DETERMINE BEST WAY TO PROCEED DEPENDING UPON HIS FURTHER VISITS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, TALKS IN KUALA LUMPUR, AND SUBSEQUENT TALKS IN OTHER CAPITALS AND NEW YORK. HARTLING
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BANGKO 26102 02 OF 02 090714Z

INDICATED THAT HE WAS PARTICULARLY LOOKING FORWARD TO HIS MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY. HARTLING SAID THAT THE SECRETARY'S VIEWS WOULD WEIGH VERY HEAVILY IN HOW HE WOULD PROCEED OVER THE NEXT MONTHS IN SECURING GREATER INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE INDOCHINESE REFUGEE PROBLEM.

8. HARTLING INDICATED ALSO THAT SENIOR THAI OFFICIALS HAD BEEN VERY CRITICAL OF OUR SLOWNESS IN IMPLEMENTING OUR LRP PROGRAM FOR THIS YEAR. THE THAIS WERE ALSO UNHAPPY ABOUT WHAT THEY SAW AS THE USG VAGUENESS ABOUT EXACTLY HOW MANY REFUGEES WOULD COME OUT OF THAILAND UNDER THIS YEAR'S 25,000 PERSON LEVEL. HARTLING URGED THAT WE EXAMINE IF THERE IS ANY WAY WE COULD SIMPLIFY AND EXPEDITE OUR REFUGEE ACCEPTANCE PROCESS. HE SAID THAT THE DELAY IN PROVIDING TRAVEL FUNDING UNTIL OCTOBER WAS A PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT AND UNNECESSARY IRRITANT.

9. FOR HIS PART, THE AMBASSADOR ASKED HARTLING TO URGE THE THAIS AND OTHER ASEAN MEMBERS TO RAISE REFUGEES AT THE EC-ASEAN MINISTERIAL MEETING. HARTLING SAID THAT THE THAIS NEEDED NO URGING AT THIS POINT ON THAT SCORE.

10. IN CONCLUSION THE AMBASSADOR SUMMED UP HARTLING'S PLAN OF ACTION:

-- THAT HARTLING WOULD BRIEF THE K.L. MEETING ON THE SITUATION AND URGE GREATER INTERNATIONAL EFFORT TO ACCEPT REFUGEES;

-- THAT HE WOULD INDICATE HIS INTEREST IN CONVENING A HIGHER LEVEL CONFERENCE IF HIS SOUNDINGS INDICATED THAT SUCH A CONFERENCE WOULD BE FRUITFUL;

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BANGKO 26102 02 OF 02 090714Z

-- THAT HE WOULD NOT USE THE EXCOMM FOR ANY INDOCHINA CONFERENCE AT THIS TIME;

-- THAT HE WOULD TAKE SOUNDINGS AMONG INTERESTED CAPITALS AND THEN DETERMINE THE APPROPRIATE WAY TO GO BUT HE DID HAVE SOME INTERNATIONAL FORUM IN MIND FOR LATER IN THE

YEAR.

11. COMMENT: THE MEETING WITH HARTLING WAS OPEN, CANDID AND CORDIAL. H OBVIOUSLY WELCOMED THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXCHANGE VIEWS. BASED ON HIS COMMENTS, HARTLING DOES APPEAR READY TO PROCEED IN A REALISTIC MANNER TOWARDS SOME INTERNATIONAL MEETING. HOWEVER, AT THE SAME TIME HARTLING CLEARLY IS CAUTIOUS, INDEED NOT AT ALL OPTIMISTIC, ABOUT ENGENDERING SIGNIFICANTLY BROADER INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT. HE OBVIOUSLY SETS GREAT STORE ON THE UPCOMING MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY IN WHICH HE HOPES TO ESTABLISH THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE USG WOULD COMMIT ITSELF TO THE SUCCESS OF A BROADER INTERNATIONAL MEETING.

12. WE WILL COMMENT FURTHER ABOUT HARTLING'S VISIT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS WHEN WE HAVE THE FINAL READOUT ON HIS MEETINGS WITH THE THAI. ABRAMOWITZ

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